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Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 DODE-00 CA-01 /052 W
----------007983 090618Z /21
R 080140Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8008
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
INS/CO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 9455

BANGKOK FOR REF COORD., HONG KONG FOR INS/DIDIR, INS/CO-
CODEP FOR COEXM AND CORAP

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: UNEXPLAINED DECLINE IN NUMBER OF BOAT REFUGEES ARRIVING
IN MALAYSIA

REF: (A) STATE 218175, (B) JAKARTA 11877, (C) KUALA LUMPUR
9456 (D) KUALA LUMPUR 7779

1. REF (A) QUERRIES WHETHER DRASTIC DECLINE IN ARRIVALS OF
BOAT REFUGEES TO MALAYSIA IS RESULT OF GOM REFUSALS OF PERMISSION
FOR REFUGEE BOATS TO LAND AND ASK JAKARTA TO BE ALERT FOR
UPSURGE IN ARRIVALS. REF (B) NOTES THAT ONLY ONE SUCH VESSEL HAS
ARRIVED, RECENTLY, IN INDONESIA. REF (C) RELATES PRESENT
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ACCEPTANCE SITUATION MALAYSIA. REF (D) REQUEST POSTS IN AREA
TO BE ALERT FOR REFUGEE VESSEL PUSHED OFF FROM SARAWAK IN AUGUST.

2. ALTHOUGH GOM ACCEPTANCE POLICY IN CERTAIN AREAS LESS BENIGN
THAN IN PAST, DEARTH OF ARRIVALS EARLY TO MID-AUGUST NOT DUE TO
BOATS BEING PUSHED-OFF, REF (C). DECLINE BELIEVED DUE, RATHER, TO
TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FACTORS.

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3. SAILING WEATHER OFF COAST OF FORMER RVN, NEVER GOOD IN AUGUST, WAS REPORTED TO BE PARTICULARLY ROUGH BY MANY OF AUGUST'S 1300 BOAT REFUGEE ARRIVALS TO MALAYSIA. REFUGEES REPORTED SIX BOATS, WITH AVERAGE OF 150 PASSENGERS EACH, HAD BEEN DISCOURAGED FROM LEAVING VUNG TAU AND VICINITY IN MID-AUGUST BECAUSE OF STORMS AND REPORTS OF STORMS (RADIO HANOI). AS MONSOONAL WEATHER PROGRESSES SOUTH, CONTINUED HEAVY ARRIVALS IN HONG KONG WERE ANTICIPATED BY REFUGEES WHO POINTED TO SAME FACTOR AS MAJOR REASON FOR RELATIVE RESPITE FROM ARRIVALS HERE IN AUGUST.

4. SECOND REASON FOR DECREASED ARRIVALS THOUGHT TO BE SRV'S OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION, PROMULGATED AUGUST 1, DECLARING THAT ALL BOATS OVER 15 METERS OR 45 H.P. WERE HENCEFORTH CONSIDERED AS NATIONALIZED. REFUGEES REPORTING PROCLAMATION SAY THAT NATIONALIZATION IS NOW ACUALLY IMPLEMENTED. ALL REGISTERED VESSELS IN SRV OF SIZE AND OR HORSEPOWER INCLUDED WERE REPORT-EDLY ORDERED CEASE ALL OPERATIONS UNTIL SRV CADRE COULD JOIN CREWS OF VESSELS AFFECTED. IF TRUE, AND IF ENFORCED (ENFORCA-BLE), DICTUM WOULD HAVE OBVIOUS EFFECT OF DIMINISHING REFUGEE DEPARTURES FROM SRV.

5. COMBINATIONS OF TRENDS SEEMING TO TAKE SHAPE DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR BOAT REFUGEES. FIRST,THE WEATHER IS APPROACHING ITS WORST PHASE OFF MALAYSIAN COAST. SECONDLY, INCIDENTS OF TOUGHER TREATMENT OF REFUGEES BY LOCAL GOM AUTHORITIES AND BY ROYAL CONFIDENTIAL

MALAYSIAN NAVY DO SEEM TO BE ON THE RISE. FINALLY, IF TRUE, REPORTED NATIONALIZATION OF LARGER VESSELS WOULD CAUSE INCREASED INCIDENCE OF LARGER GROUPS OF REFUGEES ATTEMPTING ESCAPES ON INCREASINGLY SMALLER, LESS POWERFUL VESSELS. AT WORST, THEN, SMALLER VESSELS, IN ROUGHER SEAS MAY BE SEEKING ASYLUM ON INCREASINGLY LESS HOSPITABLE COAST IN MONTHS TO COME.

6. THOUGH ARRIVALS ARE UP CONSIDERABLY IN PAST SEVEN DAYS TO RATE OF ABOUT 100 REFUGEES PER DAY, CONTINUED ADMISSION OF REFUGEES TO MALAYSIA PREDICATED ON MAINTAINING HIGH RATE OF DEPARTURES-FOR-RESETTLEMENT.

7. INTERNATIONALIZATION IS WORKING FAIRLY WELL. DEPARTURES OF BOAT REFUGEES FOR THIRD COUNTRIES FROM MALAYSIA IN AUGUST EXCEEDED DEPARTURES FOR THE U.S. BY A CONSIDERABLE MARGIN. OVERALL, THIRD COUNTRY RESETTLEMENT ACCOUNTED FOR ABOUT 7 O/O OF ALL BOAT REFUGEES FROM MALAYSIA IN PEET 12 MONTHS.

8. IN VIEW OF THE CRISIS WHICH MAY BE PRECIPITATING DUE TO FACTORS CONSIDERED PARA 5, AND NOTING DEMONSTRABLE ASSUMPTION OF "FAIR SHARE" OF RESETTLEMENT BURDEN BY AUSTRALIA IN PARTICULAR, U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT OF DEVICE TO INCREASE RATE OF DEPARTURES EX

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MALAYSIA IN NEAR FUTURE WOULD BE MOST WELCOME. UNHCR BRIEFING
OF 20 SEPTEMBER WOULD BE OPPORTUNE FORUM. BESIDES ENCOURAGING
GOM TO CONTINUE LARGE-SCALE ADMISSIONS OF BOAT REFUGEES,
ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW CONDITIONAL ENTRY PROGRAM, FOR EXAMPLE, MIGHT
IT IS FELT, SPUR EVEN GREATER THIRD COUNTRY PARTICIPATION IN
RESETTLEMENT EFFORT.
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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